

Virtual Gateway News

A Publication of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services Virtual Gateway



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In This Edition

- **Welcome from the Secretary**
- **Spotlight on a Common Intake Provider**
- **Virtual Gateway's EIM/ESM Wins National eC3 Award**
- **Spotlight on Virtual Gateway Team Member**
- **Provider Data Management**
- **From the CTO: Production Monitoring**



JudyAnn Bigby, M.D.

Welcome from the Secretary

Welcome to the first edition of the Virtual Gateway News. My staff and I are excited to share information about the work we have been doing and what we have been able to accomplish here in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). Our goal is to keep everyone who uses or is interested in the Virtual Gateway updated and informed through this quarterly newsletter.

The Virtual Gateway is a one-stop access point on the Internet for a broad range of services and programs within EOHHS. More than 23,000 individuals and more than 1,600 provider organizations across the Commonwealth use the Virtual Gateway to conduct business with EOHHS and deliver needed services to our constituencies.

One of our flagship services is Common Intake, which collected its 500,000th application this month. This service enables families throughout the Commonwealth to apply for and receive needed services ranging from health care coverage to food stamps benefits to child development screenings – all in a single, easy-to-use application form. Our hope is that providers will use the Virtual Gateway to enroll individuals and families in as many diverse programs and services for which they are eligible and in need.

In Fiscal Year 2007 alone, approximately 150,000 families were screened for eligibility through this integrated application and eligible for over \$650 million in services. The success of Common Intake depends on our partnerships with hundreds of providers across the Commonwealth. Hospitals, neighborhood health centers, and community-based organizations use Common Intake. And Common Intake is just *one* of the many on-line services found on the Virtual Gateway.

In this newsletter, you will meet some of the Virtual Gateway staff and learn how the Virtual Gateway team assists providers and agencies, develops new systems and ensures that our providers are able use our services efficiently and effectively.

We look forward to your comments and feedback as we continually look for ways to improve.

JudyAnn Bigby, M.D.
Secretary of Health and Human Services

Virtual Gateway's EIM/ESM Wins National eC3 Award

The Enterprise Invoice/Service Management (EIM/ESM) service has been recognized for "Excellence in Administrative and Financial Transformation" by the National Electronic Commerce Coordinating Council (eC3) board of directors and awards committee. EIM/ESM has significantly improved the way providers of health and human services interact with the Commonwealth in regards to invoice and client management. Today, eight agencies within EOHHS manage contracts and invoicing through the service, which is slated to streamline contracts valued at \$2.6 billion annually by the end of 2008. This award recognizes this innovative technology solution as a national model. Our thanks goes to the team of individuals at the Virtual Gateway, in the agencies, and at so many provider sites statewide who work tirelessly to continue improving, strengthening and expanding this remarkable service.

Spotlight on a Common Intake Provider

Common Intake is now accessed by over 1,600 provider organizations throughout the Commonwealth. One of those organizations is Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). Joseph Ianelli is the Manager of Patient Financial Services at MGH and oversees a team that uses the Virtual Gateway's Common Intake application daily. He shared with EOHHS some of the improvements his team and patients have experienced as a result of using the streamlined Common Intake application at MGH.

For MGH, as it has for many provider organizations, the Virtual Gateway has consolidated the MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, and Health Safety Net Trust Fund applications into one that is supported by a single customer service group. Additionally, the two-way communication of submitting the online application and then being notified of application status has been extremely helpful to Mr. Ianelli and his team at MGH. The staff are delighted with these changes.

"We have some new staff members who don't know what things were like before the Virtual Gateway, but we also have people who were here both before and now after the implementation of the Virtual Gateway. I like to call them the 'Old Timers,' " jokes Mr. Ianelli. "They remember how it was before, and they genuinely appreciate how the Virtual Gateway has helped them." The way that the Virtual Gateway has consolidated and standardized the forms and processes has been great for MGH. "The forms and processes are a lot more clear, and the staff like not having to sort through all of that paper."

The patients have benefited, as well. "When an application is submitted, a list of verification documents that will be needed is printed out, so we can be sure that a patient will be missing no information." And once the application is complete, "the turnaround time for a decision is much quicker," Mr. Ianelli reports, which enables MGH to deliver needed services sooner.

"The Virtual Gateway has revolutionized what we do," says Mr. Ianelli. "It's absolutely terrific."

Spotlight on a Virtual Gateway Team Member

Name: Sharlene Sharif-Burton

Job title: Deployment Specialist,
Provider Access Lead (PAL)

Hometown: Dorchester

At the VG Since: September 2005

Random fact: Her four year old nephew, who spends summers with her in Boston, bakes the world's best sugar cookies.

What she does: Provides direct support to providers as they prepare to begin using Virtual Gateway services by helping them enroll their organizations and users onto the Gateway. This includes helping with user account requests, training assignments and forms completion, among



many other things. Works with agencies to reach out to and facilitate communication with providers.

In her words: "I let providers know that I'm their **PAL** and here to guide them through the process from the first introductory phone call to their go-live date! I love knowing that at the end of the day I made my provider feel better and look forward to moving ahead in the process."

Featured Program: Provider Data Management (PDM)

EOHHS is pleased to announce that, for the second year in a row, the Salary Reserve for FY08 was disbursed using the Provider Data Management System (PDM). As of January 2008, more than \$23 million was distributed to 31,526 individuals and approximately 450 providers. The Salary Reserve funds are targeted specifically to increase compensation to eligible workers in Purchase of Service (POS) organizations. EOHHS is responsible for managing the allocation process and distributing the annually appropriated Salary Reserve funds.

To facilitate collection of contract data, EOHHS utilizes the PDM service on the Virtual Gateway. PDM serves as a centralized repository for information about POS providers and agencies. Salary Reserve is just one of the programs operated through this service. Providers submit payroll data, agencies verify the accuracy of the information submitted and EOHHS calculates the salary reserve allocation for eligible employees. Later this year, EOHHS will release an updated version of PDM, which will assist agencies in managing the provider qualification process and overseeing completion of corrective action plans and audit resolution agreements.

From the CTO: Production Monitoring

One important aspect of any information technology system — particularly one as complex as the Virtual Gateway — is its ability to monitor and report on the status of the system and user experiences. This includes basic system monitoring, more complex problem notifications, and end user simulation. Effective monitoring ensures that system problems are identified as quickly as possible and, hopefully, before they affect users.

The Virtual Gateway employs these monitoring abilities on all its business services using a toolset built by Hewlett-Packard called OpenView. This tool is used by companies worldwide including Avaya, Chevron and Hawaiian Electric for essential oversight and management of technology systems. The Virtual Gateway technical team monitors all server environments, ensuring that disk space, processing and memory (among other things) are kept at normal levels. If problems arise, notifications are delivered automatically to key personnel.

These tools also simulate user activity for many VG applications, 24 hours a day to ensure the systems are working as they should. Information about significant changes in system behavior or response times is immediately routed to VG Operations Staff, who respond quickly to any problem. Services being monitored in this way include EIM/ESM, Common Intake, and STARS.

Jason Snyder
EOHHS Chief Technology Officer

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